

Throughout my career in the House of Representatives, I have consistently advocated for policies that promote animal welfare and species conservation. I believe that it is essential for us to protect those animals that cannot protect themselves.

As you may know, *the Endangered Species Act of 1973* is one of the most significant conservation laws in the United States, and has provided a vital safety net for species on the verge of extinction. Under this law, endangered species are provided with various protections to ensure that they exist for future generations to learn from and enjoy. This law has successfully protected such iconic American animals as the Bald Eagle and the Grizzly Bear and provides critical protections for countless other species.

Unfortunately, the Bush administration and many House Republicans have sought to eliminate funding for the departments and programs that help revitalize dying animal species. The Bush administration tried to weaken *the Endangered Species Act* by removing protections for endangered species habitat, limiting the listing of new endangered species, and allowing logging, development, and other industrial practices to continue even if those activities threaten endangered species. Those proposed actions were absurd and irresponsible. I oppose any efforts to weaken the existing protections for vulnerable species under *the Endangered Species Act*.

My home state of Florida has the third highest number of endangered species in the nation, making me acutely aware of the need to protect wildlife. Last year, I proudly received the Florida Panther Protection Award from the Conservancy of Southwest Florida for my efforts to save the Florida Panther from extinction. In April 2009, I introduced H.Res. 1314, a resolution urging the government of Canada to end the commercial seal hunt. In May 2009, I introduced H.Res. 1420, a resolution recognizing the important contributions the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora has made in regulating international trade in endangered species and protecting endangered species worldwide. The legislation also urges the Convention to adopt stronger protections for certain species at the next conference.

In addition, I believe that it is crucial to regulate the importation of nonnative wildlife species to the U.S. since it can present several environmental and national security threats. I am currently a cosponsor of H.R. 669, the *Nonnative Wildlife Invasion Prevention Act*, which regulates the importation of nonnative wildlife species to the U.S. The introduction of invasive species has

resulted in the alteration of U.S. ecosystems, the loss of biodiversity and the transmission of exotic diseases, among other threats to the environment and public health. As a Floridian, I recognize the need to preserve wildlife so that animals and their habitats remain stable and healthy, and I am deeply committed to creating and maintaining a balanced ecosystem that allows for the coexistence of human beings and nature's most incredible species. This is why I introduced H.R. 4497, the

Wildlife and Zoological Veterinary Medicine Enhancement Act,

which would expand the workforce of veterinarians specialized in the care and conservation of wild animals. The BP oil spill has sadly shown us how crucial it is to have veterinary personnel trained to respond to emergencies and protect our nation's wild animals.

Lastly, I have proudly offered my support to a number of legislative initiatives that seek to ensure that all animals receive fair and humane treatment, and that those used for research are used lawfully and in the most humane way possible. In the 111th Congress, I was a cosponsor of the

Act,

Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act

, the

Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act

, the

Animal Crush Video Prohibition Act,

the

Pet

Safety and Protection Act

and the

Puppy Uniform Protection and Safety Act,

among others.

It is crucial that the U.S. government avoid putting the well-being of animals at risk whenever possible, particularly if safer and equally effective research methods are readily available. Congress must also take into account the cruelty of testing on animals when drafting legislation, particularly when allocating funding for laboratories. I am committed to exploring alternative methods to attain research while respecting the treatment of animals. Rest assured that I will continue the fight to eliminate animal cruelty in all of its forms and serve as a voice for animal rights in the 112th Congress.

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